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SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR IO AND WHA

E.O. 12598: N/A

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SUBJECT: HONDURAS: REQUEST FOR INSTRUCTIONS

11. (SBU) Summary: The General Committee (Bureau) of UNESCO's 35th General Conference was unable to reach consensus as to whether the draft resolution on Honduras (see text paragraph 8) should be added to the agenda for the General Conference. The President, therefore, opted to forward the issue to the General Conference Plenary for decision. A two-thirds majority vote will be required for the resolution to be added to the agenda. A vote is expected on Monday, October 12. Action needed: The U.S. Delegation requests the Department provide instructions for voting (see paragraph 9). End Summary.

12. (U) With no clear consensus emerging after debating for two meetings, General Conference President Davidson Hepburn (Bahamas), announced he would forward the issue to the full Plenary of UNESCO's 35th General Conference for a vote, under Rule 15, Paragraph 2, of the Rule of Procedure of the General Conference, which states that:

"new items of an important and urgent character may be added to the agenda by approval of a two-thirds majority of the Members present and voting; but such new items shall be referred to the General Committee of the Conference for its report, in accordance with Rule 42, paragraph 1 (c), before the vote is taken. The discussion of any new item so added to the agenda shall, at the request of any Member State or Associate Member, be deferred for a period not exceeding seven days after its inclusion in the agenda."

13. (U) Hepburn's move came after Venezuela, representing the co-sponsors of the Honduras-related draft resolution (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Guatemala, Jamaica), spoke emotionally during the General Committee meeting, saying that UNESCO's General Conference could not remain silent on the situation in Honduras. The Dominican Republic also expressed strong support for the resolution.

14. (U) Delegates from the U.S., Canada, France, Australia, and Madagascar spoke during the Bureau meeting, stating that while the situation in Honduras is certainly worthy of concern, it is already being dealt with by other competent bodies within the United Nations and, specifically, at the OAS. Others expressed concern that such draft resolutions potentially open the door to a huge number of such proposals, and divert attention from the core concerns of UNESCO's mandate during the General Conference.

15. (SBU) While many European Member States privately expressed their agreement with the U.S. on keeping country-specific resolutions off of UNESCO's agenda, several were instructed to take no public stance on the subject.

16. (SBU) As noted in Para 2, under the UNESCO Rules of Procedure, a two-thirds majority of states present and voting is needed to add a new item to the General Conference agenda. It is not clear whether the co-sponsors will be able to muster the 129 votes (2/3 of the 193 Member States), or a lesser threshold if several member states are not present or abstain. As noted by France, it is possible that several EU States may vote for the resolution or abstain so as to not been seen as opposing the substance of the resolution.

17. (SBU) Even if they succeed in having the draft resolution added to the agenda, the proposed text could be modified by amendment

offered by any Member State. While the current text has been cut back and toned down from the original proposal, the precedent of proposing such country-specific draft resolutions that are being handled elsewhere in the UN system remains, we believe, a direction that UNESCO must avoid.

18. (U) Begin text of proposed draft resolution:

TITLE: Impacts on the education system and freedom of expression as a consequence of the situation in Honduras

The General Conference,

Taking into account the Constitution of UNESCO,

Welcoming the declarations of the Director-General of UNESCO expressed in his press releases about the situation in Honduras,

Expressing concern with the negative impacts on the functioning of the education system of Honduras,

11. Requests the Director-General to keep following the developments in Honduras strictly in the fields of competence of UNESCO according to its Constitution.

End text.

19. (U) ACTION REQUESTED: Ambassador has been convoked by General Conference President Hepburn for a meeting late this afternoon Paris time. We anticipate he will try to walk back his decision of this morning and ask our help in avoiding a vote on inclusion of the Honduras item in the Plenary on Monday. (He has already made this appeal to the French and Canadian delegations). Mission requests Department's guidance as to whether we should continue to press Hepburn for a Plenary vote on inclusion of the present Honduras draft resolution or work with him to amend the text in a way that limits the damage and allows us to support its inclusion. If Washington believes that we should continue to oppose inclusion of the Honduras item, Mission requests Department officials engage our European colleagues directly to urge they vote against inclusion of the item on the agenda. Mission would also appreciate any information Department can provide on the educational situation in Honduras. KILLION